

The Four Voices: How to Think Like a Christian

The Voice of the Flesh

Rough Transcript

Patrick Morley

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Good morning, men. Please turn in your Bibles to Jeremiah chapter 17, verse 9. We are in the series **The Four Voices**. The verse for the series, Proverbs 4:23, "Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life. Everything you do flows from it." It determines the entire course of your life.

We have these voices in our head in addition to our own that are trying to disrupt that. It's what we're guarding against. The four voices in your head are the world, the flesh, the devil, and the Holy Spirit. Your job is to figure out which voice is speaking and make the adjustment. Today we're going to talk about the voice of the flesh.

Preparing this talk, I was working diligently and really pouring myself into it. I'm very intense. Being productive is one of my highest values. I was all set to go to rush up to my office and finish writing out the message. I walked past my wife, briskly. She was laying on the couch, lounging, surfing the internet. She saw me coming by. She saw that I was walking pretty fast, but she said, "Honey, could you get me another cup of coffee?" and I froze. There were about five seconds when I didn't say anything where I was deciding whether I was going to respond in the flesh or I was going to respond in the spirit. Fortunately, this time I didn't say some mean, snarky, rude or crude comment, but I said, "Honey, I'd be happy to get you another cup of coffee," which I did, and then I rushed up here to do work on this talk.

WHY DO WE KEEP SINNING?

The first thing I want us to talk about this morning, why do we keep sinning? Essentially, it's a heart issue. We have a diseased heart. Jeremiah chapter 17 verse 9 says, "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?"

Jesus talked about how out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. He said in Mark chapter 7, verse 20 and following, "For it is from within, out of a person's heart, that evil thoughts come. Sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance, and folly. All these evils come inside and defile a person." The scriptures variously refer to this as the flesh, the sinful nature, the cravings of the sinful nature, the passions and desires of the flesh, the law of sin and death, and in many other ways.

Essentially, you and I, and this is the core problem, we have a dual nature. The creation has made us in the image of God. The fall has made us, as Pascal noted, like the beasts.

There's a great story that's attributed to the 1926 Minnesota Crime Commission Report. It's not in there. I looked it over yesterday. It's 77 pages long and it's not in there trust me. But wherever it came from, it really is good. It says, "Every baby starts life as a little savage. He is completely selfish and self centered. He wants what he wants it when he wants it, his bottle, his mother's attention, his playmate's toys, his uncle's watch, or whatever. Deny him these and he seethes with rage and aggressiveness, which would be murderous were he not so helpless. He's dirty. He has no morals, no knowledge, no developed skills. This means that all children, not just certain children, but all children are born delinquent. If permitted

to continue in their self centered world of infancy, given free reign to their impulsive actions to satisfy each one, every child would grow up a criminal, a thief, a killer, a rapist." Don't you just love that?

Because of the creation, we are like the image of God. But because of the fall, we are like the beasts. Because of grace, we are new creations, but this new creation is both an event and a process. Our conversion is both an event and a process. Our sanctification takes ... it's a process that takes place over time.

We see this in Paul in Romans chapter 7. If you want to take a look there with me at Romans chapter 7:15, he says ... and this is interesting because it's a moment of personal transparency and vulnerability. In other words, Paul is confessing this to us, to the whole world, both then and forever. "I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do."

Then skipping to verse 17, he says, "As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. For I know that good itself does not dwell in me. That is in my sinful nature. For I desire to do what is good, but I can't carry it out. For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do, this I keep on doing. Now, if I do not do what I want for it ... Now, if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. So I find this law at work, although I want to do good, evil is right there with me."

Then in verse 22, he explains how we have these two natures. "For in my inner being I delight in God's law." That's the first nature, but the second nature, "But I see another law in me waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me."

Paul is really giving us here a template for how to deal with the flesh, and the way to deal with the flesh is to get it out into the open. The Big Idea today; **The power of the flesh is secrecy**, and the way to overcome the secrecy is to bring it out into the light as Paul has done. He's both explained the fact that we do have these two natures, he's explained a little bit how it works, but he's also brought it out of the secrecy and into the light, and I'm sure that helped him deal with it.

What his sins were, we don't know. There are all kinds of sins. There are misdemeanors and there are felonies. We're going to next deal with the things that trigger for us the majority of the things that tempt our flesh.

IDENTIFY WHAT TRIGGERS YOU SINFUL CRAVINGS

The second circle today is identify what triggers your sinful cravings. Identify what triggers your sinful cravings. We're going to talk about the three big areas where we get tempted. We saw this last week in our text, 1 John chapter 2, verse 16, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. Let's take them one by one.

The first is the lust of the flesh. The first thing, and probably the biggest thing that comes to mind of course, is sexual temptation. Job said that he had made a covenant with his eyes that he would not look lustfully on a young woman, so I said that too. I don't know about you, but I found it a lot easier to keep that covenant before yoga pants became casual wear.

Sex sins and sex temptations are not the only things that trigger the cravings of our flesh. All sensual desires, sex, but it could also be food. It could be drink. It could be drugs. Question for you. In the lust of the flesh, what is it that triggers the cravings of your sinful nature?

Next, the lust of the eyes. This would be the desire for riches, possessions, pleasures of different kinds. I don't know about you. My big area here, I'm a car guy. I just love a nice car. But I find that when I do get a nice car and I pick a color, say I pick red, I love it for two weeks and then after two weeks goes by I see a black one and I wish I would've bought the black one. That's how the lust of the eyes works.

Then the pride of life. No doubt this is the biggest area for me personally. I love being productive. I'm self-reliant. I like to be in charge of things. I'm a leader. I don't necessarily have to be in control, but I do

want to be respected as a subject expert. All of these things lend themselves to a type of self righteousness.

Hebrews 3 verse 13 talks about the deceitfulness of sin. Martin Luther is quoted in Philip Hughes' commentary on Hebrews to say this. He says, "This phrase, the deceitfulness of sin, ought to be understood in a much wider sense so that the term includes even one's own righteousness and wisdom. For more than anything else, one's own righteousness and wisdom deceive and work against faith in Christ. Since we love the flesh, and the sensations of the flesh, and also riches and possessions, but we love nothing more ardently than our own feelings, judgment, purpose, and will, especially when they seem to be good." We end up having this sense that the rightness of our ... the correctness of us being right is something that entitles us to respect, and there's a certain pride of life that comes with it.

What is that for you? What is it for you with the lust of the flesh that triggers your cravings? What is it for you for the lust of the eyes that triggers your cravings, this craving of the sinful nature? Then what is it in the pride of life that triggers your flesh? I want to help you bring it out in the open, because as the Big Idea says, **The power of the flesh is secrecy.**

IDEAS TO FURTHER CRUCIFY YOUR FLESH

The third thing we want to talk about this morning, ideas to further crucify your flesh. When we become Christians through Christ, we do crucified the flesh with its passions and desires, but we have to keep crucifying it, too.

One of our table leaders, John, a fantastic discipler of men, has recruited a number of the leaders to our Bible study. I think four or five of the leaders have been men that have come out of his table. He was with his wife one day, and she's directionally challenged. John isn't patient, and he became very impatient with her and he said, "Why do you do that? I just don't understand why you do that." That created a little bit of an ice age there for a moment.

A few days later, he called his wife and his middle daughter together and he said, "You know, I am an impatient person and I don't want to be that way. I want to be a better husband and father, and so I want to give you permission to speak into my life, and I'm asking you if you would help me to be a better husband and father."

The next day, his wife came in to have coffee with him and he said, "You know, I really want to apologize to you for being the impatient man that I am." About a week later, he had a follow-up meeting with them. He asked them how he was doing. They said, "You're doing a lot better," and he gave them the power to have some accountability in his life.

What I want to do is I want to take that story, and what Paul said, and some other things ... Excuse me. And I want to give you some ideas that can help you crucify the flesh.

The first is humility. Martin Luther said, "If you only see yourself as a little sinner, you will inevitably see Jesus as a little savior." Rather it's to not be like the Pharisee with the pride of life who said, "I'm glad I'm not like that sinner over there. I fast twice a week. I tithe."

The second is repentance. Repentance would be to do what the sinner did, the tax collector did, as opposed to the Pharisee. He said, "Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner."

The next idea is to grow in your personal faith. We have humility and the vulnerability that comes with that, repentance, faith. Galatians chapter 2 verse 20, Paul said, "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live. The life I now live in the body I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

Working on our discipleship is such an important part of crucifying the flesh or continuing to crucify the flesh. Being with other men who can help you along the way. One of our area directors was telling me this week about a man whose wife divorced him after 47 years because he didn't have anybody in his

life. Broken, he became part of a church. The church, the men in the church were ready for him. They took him under their wing. They disciplined him. Three years later, his wife became terminally ill and he went to minister to her and take care of her. After she passed away, his children, from whom he had been alienated, asked him if he would start attending church with them. The power of discipleship.

Walk by the Spirit. Galatians chapter 5 verse 16 says, "Walk by the Spirit and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature." You've heard this story I'm sure about the man who said, "I feel like I have ... I'm just in such turmoil. I feel like I have two dogs inside of me and they're fighting." His friend said, "Well, which one's winning?" Well, the man said, "The one I feed the most." Feed the Spirit, starve the flesh.

Then take personal responsibility for what's going on. It's not just turning it over to God. It's taking person responsibility as well. I put some termite stakes around our house. Five of them popped up. I was talking to the man, the lawn man about it, and he said, "Well, think about it. You put these termite stakes in. They have cardboard in there that's treated with something that attracts termites. Why are you surprised?" He said it would be like putting bird seed in the bird feeder and then being surprised when the birds came to eat it. Take personal responsibility. Don't put out temptations around you so close that you're going to want to eat them, you're going to succumb to the cravings of the sinful nature.

Personal accountability, just giving some people permission, like John did, to speak into your life and then to check in with them about how you're doing. We're trying to, again here, figure out how do we neuter the power of the flesh, which is this secrecy. Well, we bring it out into the light.

Last thing I'll just mention is selfless service. One of the most incredible things I think that we can do that just neuters the power of the flesh is to serve others without expecting anything in return. I know it's hard. I pray for people. I prayed for a man and his two sons. I do that. I've been doing that for a number of years. I send him a text from time to time that I'm praying for his son. I never hear back from him. In the flesh, I would want some kind of a response from him, not necessarily a full tit for tat, but I would like to hear from him, but I don't hear from him. It would be in my pride, in my sinful nature, in my flesh a temptation to get huffy and stop praying for him. But I find that continuing to pray for that man helps diffuse the power of the flesh in me. The power of the flesh is secrecy.

I hope these ideas are helpful to you to help further crucify your flesh. In your questions, you'll have an opportunity to work through some of these things and think about them a little bit more deeply. Thank you for being part of the Bible study today. Let's pray.

Our Father, thank you that you have given us the means to work through our sanctification, to neuter the flesh, to bring it out into the light. Thank you for the explanation of your scriptures to help us understand, but moreover how to apply it to our own lives, how we can overcome the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life. I pray that you would help each of us, Lord, to have someone in our lives that can help us work through these further ways that we can crucify our flesh. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Thank you, men. Look forward to seeing you soon. Next week, Khayree will bring you a second message about the flesh, and then I'll be back with you to talk about the devil. God bless.